

# NERVOUS DEBILITY.

THE

NATURE, CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES,

AND

Hygienic Treatment of Invalids

SUFFERING OF

PREMATURELY EXHAUSTED VITALITY.

BY

R. T. TRALL, M.D.,

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THE NEW YORK HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, ETC., ETC.

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## P R E F A C E .

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“NERVOUS DEBILITY” is a phrase of fearful significance. Though employed, often, in a vague sense, and, frequently, in no sense at all, it is commonly understood to imply constitutional infirmities induced by such early habits and practices as exhaust the vital energies, and lay the foundation for feeble manhood and premature decay.

The general and increasing feebleness of American youth of both sexes has long been a subject of popular discussion, and a leading topic of remark in the magazines and newspapers of the day. Still, there is very general ignorance abroad as to the real causes and the proper remedies. Physicians and physiologists frequently point to sexual abuses as the most prominent among all the causes of *nervous debility*, so apparent everywhere among our people. This is true so far as the *direct* causes are concerned. But there are also *indirect* causes, which constitute the very roots of this tree of evil; and these must be exterminated ere we can hope to do more than mitigate the maladies and miseries which, if not arrested, will ere long overwhelm society and ruin the race.

Contemplated in this view, no subject can be more interesting to the intelligent physiologist, and none more alarming to the real philanthropist, than those personal habits and social usages which constitute the predisposing causes of the evils we are considering. History is full of instruction on this subject. Every nation which has thus far “risen, and reigned, and fell,” has declined just in the ratio that its youth have become deteriorated in vital stamina.

There is no possible affliction that can befall imperfect and erring humanity more deplorable than the possession of the framework and form of manhood or womanhood, with a knowledge of the great duties and responsibilities of life, yet without the power to perform or to enjoy the most essential functions pertaining to an earthly existence—to become a wreck and a ruin ere the process of development is half accomplished.

I am satisfied that here, as everywhere, ignorance is the evil, and knowledge the remedy ; my experience in prescribing for several thousands of patients, whose troubles were the direct or indirect consequences of sexual abuses, or of the manner of life which led to those abuses, and an extensive correspondence with this class of invalids, running through a period of nearly twenty years, have convinced me that this wide-spread evil is still on the increase in nearly all parts of the civilized world. So far as I can learn, it is only in the immediate vicinity of a few Water-Cure Establishments, and in neighborhoods where the instructive and reformatory publications of Fowler and Wells, of this city, are freely circulated, that any saving attention is given to the subject, or any improvement manifest among the people.

We have, then, almost the whole world before us as a missionary field ; and the object of this little tract is to direct attention to the subject, to the end that the erring and unfortunate may be restored to health and usefulness, the causes which have misled and degraded them removed from the pathway of others, and the blighting curse of physiological transgression exchanged for the process of individual and social renovation.

R. T. T.

NEW YORK HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, }  
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# INTRODUCTION.

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THE two propensities which human beings have in all ages most abused, and which from their very nature are most liable to misuse and perversion, are *Alimentiveness* and *Amativeness*. These functions lie at the very foundation of existence. They are, for good and obvious reasons, the most powerful passions with which any animal or any human organism is endowed. It is necessary they should be so, or self-preservation could not be, in the living domain, the first law of Nature. Alimentiveness, when normally exercised, is a source of constant enjoyment while our earthly existence continues. The normal exercise of Amativeness is more intensely pleasurable than any other sensation of which living beings are capable of experiencing.

The misuse or perversion of Alimentiveness produces, generally, obstructions in the first instance. The secondary consequences are, impure blood, depraved secretions, morbid deposits, and foul humors, resulting in various constitutional diatheses and cachexies, as the plethoric, the adipose, the scrofulous, the scorbutic, the gouty and rheumatic, the apoplectic, the calculous, the bilious, etc. Indigestion or dyspepsia, general atony or anemia, torpor and paralysis, are among the final consequences. In a word, abused Alimentiveness induces *indirect nervous debility*.

Misused or perverted Amativeness induces *direct nervous debility*. It simply wastes the vital energies. It abstracts and exhausts the unreplenishable fund of life, as directly as bleeding diminishes the living stream and destroys the vital resources. Its *modus operandi* is quite analogous to that of alcohol, tobacco, opium, digitalis, henbane, nux vomica, prussic acid, aconite, gelseminum, hellebore, ergot, niter, or any other narcotic or anti-phlogistic drug. It is *anti-vital* in precisely the same sense that any drug-medicine or poison is. Both provoke vital resistance, and this implies the direct expenditure of vital energy.

It is as difficult to realize the processes of decay, as they go on from day to day, as it is the processes of growth or development. A person may



increase in bodily stature every day in the year, and not feel sensibly larger with each succeeding day. He only knows that he has gained in bulk by comparing his present dimensions with his measurement some weeks, or months, or years before. He ascertains that he is stronger by doing things which he could not have done previously. And so a person may decline in vigor, decrease in bodily stamina, expend the vital energies faster than the organism can build itself up or resupply the waste, without appreciating any change from day to day. But when, in after years, he finds pain, feebleness, and infirmity, where there should be pleasure, strength, and soundness, he begins to realize the accumulated effects of his misdeeds.

Every animated organism is created with a determinate fund of vitality, which constitutes its capital stock of life. This may be expended slowly or rapidly; but it can never be increased. It may be used up, but can never be replenished. No one can ever regain the least particle of vital power once wasted. All that he can do is to make the best use of what remains. Health and longevity depend on its judicious expenditure. If expended only in the normal processes, in harmony with the laws of the vital organism, health, strength, and long life are the certain results. If expended abnormally, in disobedience to those laws, disease, debility, and premature death are inevitable. Hence, health and disease, life and death, are, to a great extent, committed to our own keeping.

It is a lamentable fact, which the intelligent observer can not overlook, that certain young men, and many young women, too, are as old, in the physiological sense, at twenty or thirty, as some men and women are at fifty or sixty. Hundreds of young men, in the neighborhood of twenty-five years of age, have consulted me in relation to the propriety of getting married, who were no more fit for the duties and responsibilities of matrimonial life than a man with two wooden legs would be for an accomplished gymnast. I could only admonish them that a conjugal alliance would be the worst *speculation* they could possibly go into; that they would certainly render themselves still more miserable, their companions utterly wretched, and their offspring, if they were so unfortunate as to have any, a curse to themselves and a disgrace to humanity.

Many persons of both sexes marry more with the view of having a good and ever-ready nurse, than of getting a competent husband or wife. Such matches are not often fortunate. A vast amount of the miseries of wedded



life, uncongeniality of tempers, and heart-alienations, are attributable more to the ill-health of one or both parties than to all other causes combined. Says Dr. Hall, in his *Journal of Health*: "An ignorant but healthy young woman is worth more to her husband, when she gets one, than a cartload of educated skeletons, or bags of bones, so thin and skinny, and tottering and frail, that literally a breath of air puts them off their feet and sends them to bed. Young man, take for a wife a healthy girl who had a good mother, but could not read a line nor write her name, nor had a dime of dower, in preference to a young woman who has graduated in music, in dancing, in grammar, philosophy, and French, an heir-ess though she be, and of a position enviable enough, but after all has no bodily health." And I would just whisper, by way of parenthesis, that the proposition is equally true applied to the other sex.

Medical men have a class of "remedies" which they term "cumulative," as colchicum, digitalis, tartar-emetic, elaterium, etc. It is said that sometimes they do not have any effect until after several doses have been taken, and then, all at once, the accumulated doses operate with dangerous violence. It is said that they "explode." I do not admire the reasoning; but the fact that they *seem* to be inert until several doses have accumulated, and then *seem* to act with tremendous, and often with deathly severity, is unquestionable. My explanation of the phenomena is very different, but the facts serve me as an illustration.

The liquor-drinker, the tobacco-user, the libertine, the riotous liver, the onanist, realize little of the wear and tear of vital tissue, and the waste of all the vital resources, until diseases and debility have so accumulated as absolutely to disable them. They may, indeed, mistake the preternatural excitement which exhausts the nervous energies for the evidence of accumulating power, as medical men all over the world mistake stimulation for strength; and as physicians everywhere prescribe tonic medicines to feeble invalids, on the absurd notion that the drugs which abstract the vitality actually *impart* it!

This is why it is so difficult to interpret rightly human experience; why it is so difficult to repair the damages resulting from perverted sexuality, and why the *preventive education* is so much more important than the remedial plan, so far as the future generations are concerned.





# NERVOUS DEBILITY.

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## CAUSES OF NERVOUS DEBILITY.

I HAVE already stated the immediate causes of *nervous debility*. I propose to treat now of the remote or predisposing causes. They are to be found chiefly in the false training, dietetic errors, and vicious associates of children and youth. Many a bright, innocent, well-meaning, but ignorant boy or girl, on the childish side of puberty, has been taught the practice of masturbation by an older playmate. I have had patients whose school-teachers initiated them into the ruinous habit. I have had several children to treat who became addicted to habitual self-pollution at eight, nine, and ten years of age. And I have had a score of patients whose whole organization was fatally dwarfed, and whose constitutions manifested unmistakable marks of decline, yet they had not passed the period of puberty. These are, of course, extreme cases; but they serve, or should serve, as frightful examples to those who are less debauched in degree; and should teach parents and guardians to train up the children, in every relation of their existence, in the way in which they would have them go through life.

That the "solitary vice" is extensively taught and practiced at boarding-schools, and even in the academies and colleges of our country, has long been known. This is much more to be regretted than wondered at, when the mode of living at



these institutions is considered. I have had patients from several of the most distinguished seminaries of learning in our country, both secular and theological, and each patient has been aware that more than one of his associates was suffering from seminal emissions. And I have had patients from at least one thousand towns in the United States, and not one of them has been ignorant of the fact that, among his particular acquaintances were several young men who were or had been ruinously addicted to the habit of self-abuse. These facts sufficiently attest the general prevalence of the evil, added to which we have the testimony of a number of observing school-teachers and physiologists in this country and in Europe.

I regard dietetic errors as among the chief predisposing causes. The early use of flesh-food, salted provisions, condiments, and stimulating or nervine beverages, as tea and coffee, certainly conduces to an inflammatory state of the whole system, and a precocious and preternatural excitement of the genital organs. Constipating food of any kind, as fine flour bread, short-cakes, crullers or doughnuts, butter-biscuits, old cheese, etc., induce congestion of the abdominal and pelvic viscera, and consequent irritation of the sexual organs. Habitual constipation is one of the most powerful incitants to self-abuse. And I must here specially execrate the swine animal, and all that appertains thereunto, as among the most gross, corrupting, inflaming, and obstructing of all things ever eaten by human beings, and peculiarly predisposing to feverish excitement and sexual precocity. Hog-food in some form or shape—pork, ham, sausage, lard, or gravy—is almost universally diffused through modern cookery; and foul humors, erysipelatous eruptions, scrofulous glands, and ulcerous mucous membranes are correspondingly prevalent among the people.

One of the consequences of gross and constipating food is, worms; and these, when existing in the rectum, or lower portion of the bowels, in the form of *ascarides*, or pin-worms, occasion a constant irritation and excitement of the genital organs, often inducing the habit of self-pollution.

Nor should the “sensation literature” of the day be over-



looked in this connection. The exciting fictions of the "story papers" are sensualizing the minds of American youth in about the same ratio that liquor and tobacco are destroying the bodies of the adults. It is hard to say whether the liquor-and-tobacco traffic, or the prurient-literature trade, is doing the most mischief at this time.

### SYMPTOMS OF NERVOUS DEBILITY.

The limits of this tract will only permit of a brief summary of the symptoms and infirmities—whose name is legion—which result from premature and excessive excitement of the sexual organs, and the loss of the seminal fluid. Nor need I. A few extracts from some of the most eminent medical authors who have given especial attention to this subject will answer the purpose of this work.

Says Aretaus: "Young persons assume the air and the diseases of the aged; they become pale, weak, effeminate, stupid, idle, and even void of understanding; their bodies bend forward, their legs are weak, they have a disgust for everything, and become good for nothing."

Sanctorius remarks: "Excessive venery weakens the stomach, destroys the digestion, prevents insensible perspiration, diminishes the natural warmth, and is usually attended with derangement of sight."

Somnius observes: "Frequent emissions of semen relax, weaken, dry, and enervate the body, and predispose to tremblings, epilepsies, and palsies."

Tulpius says: "The spinal marrow wastes, and the whole body and mind become languid, and the patient perishes in misery."

Hoffman says: "After long nocturnal pollutions, the patient not only loses strength, becomes emaciated and pale, but the memory is impaired, a continual sensation of coldness affects all the extremities, the sight becomes dim, and the whole body gradually wasted; the sleep, disturbed by unpleasant dreams, does not refresh, and pains are felt like those produced by bruises."



Boerhaave remarks : "Too great loss of semen produces weakness, debility, immobility, convulsions, emaciation, dryness, pains in the membranes of the brain, impairs the senses, particularly that of sight, gives rise to dorsal consumption, indolence, and to the several diseases connected with them."

De Senac declares that, "all who indulge in the vice of masturbation, will be afflicted in the flower of their youth with the infirmities of age."

Hippocrates describes the later stage of the complaint arising from frequent seminal emissions : "The patients have no fever, and although they eat well, they grow thin and waste away. They have a sensation like ants crawling from the head down along the spine. Whenever they go to stool, or evacuate their urine, a considerable quantity of a very thin seminal fluid escapes from the urethra. They lose the power of procreation, yet often dream of venereal pleasures. They become very weak, and walking produces shortness of breath ; they have pains in the head, and ringing in the ears, and finally an acute fever supervenes, and they die."

Another author mentions the following : "If seminal emissions, which are sure to be the sequence of a prolonged habit of masturbation, continue, they at first cause a feeling of lassitude, sleepiness, want of ambition, hesitancy of action and speech, dimness of vision, confusion and want of concentration of thought, treacherous memory, nervousness, by which he is easily frightened, sudden starts at trifling noises, want of confidence, indisposition to mingle in society, especially that of females, impotence and sterility, indigestion, costiveness or diarrhea, dark spots under and around the eyes, emaciation, pain in the chest and back, weakness in the legs, idiocy, and insanity."

I will conclude this branch of our subject with an extract from the able report of Dr. Howe on idiocy, presented to the Massachusetts Legislature in February, 1848 :

"A knowledge of the extent to which the habit of self-pollution prevails would astonish and shock many. It is indeed a pestilence which walketh in darkness, because, while it saps



and weakens all the higher qualities of the mind, it so strengthens low cunning and deceit, that the victim goes on in his habit unsuspected, until he is arrested by some one whose practiced eye reads his sin in the very means which he takes to conceal it, or until all sense of shame is forever lost in the night of idiocy, with which his day so early closes.

“Many a child who confides everything else to a loving parent, conceals this practice in its innermost heart. The sons or daughters who dutifully, conscientiously, and religiously confess themselves to father, mother, or priest, on every other subject, never allude to this. Nay, they strive to cheat and deceive by false appearances ; for, as against this darling sin, duty, conscience, and religion are all nothing. They even think to cheat God, or cheat themselves into the belief that He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, can still regard their sin with favor.

“Many a fond parent looks with wondering anxiety upon the puny frame, the feeble purpose, the fitful humors of a dear child, and, after trying all the remedies to restore him to vigor of body and vigor of mind, goes journeying about from place to place, hoping to leave the offending cause behind, while the victim hugs the disgusting serpent closely to his bosom and conceals it carefully in his vestment.

“The evils which this sinful habit works in a direct and positive manner are not so appreciable, perhaps, as those which it effects in an indirect and negative way. For one victim which it leads down to the depths of idiocy, there are scores and hundreds whom it makes shame-faced, languid, irresolute, and inefficient for any high purpose of life. The symptoms of it are easily learned, and it once seen, should be immediately noticed.

“Nothing is more false than the common doctrine of delicacy and reserve in the treatment of this habit. All hints, all indirect advice, all attempts to cure it by creating diversions, will generally do nothing but increase the cunning with which it is concealed. The way is to throw aside all reserve ; to charge the offense directly home ; to show up its disgusting



nature and hideous consequences in glowing colors ; to apply the cauterizing seething hot, and press it into the very quick, unsparingly and unceasingly.

“Much good has been done of late years by the publication of cheap books upon this subject. They should be put into the hands of all youths suspected of the vice. They should be forced to attend to the subject. There should be no squeamishness about it. There need be no fear of weakening virtue by letting it look upon such hideous deformity as this vice presents. Virtue is not salt, or sugar, to be affected by such exposure, but the crystal or diamond that repels all foulness from its surface. Acquaintance with such a vice as this, as is gained by having it held up before the eyes in all its ugliness, can only serve to make it detested and avoided.”

The following sentence will excite the astonishment of many fond mothers who have never dreamed of the horrid practice referred to :

“There are cases recorded where servant-women, who had charge of little girls, deliberately taught them the habits of self-abuse in order that they might exhaust themselves and go to sleep quietly. This had happened in private houses as well as in the alms-houses ; and such little girls have become idiotic.”

That I have not written unadvisedly of the prevalence of the habit in schools is shown by the following testimony of Dr. Howe :

“There is no *cordon sanitaire* for vice ; we can not put it into quarantine nor shut it up in a hospital ; if we allow its existence in our neighborhood, it poisons the very air which our children breathe.

“The above remarks forcibly apply to *all* our public schools, for I have become too well acquainted, I was about to say, with the alarming extent to which it prevails, often even in the most open manner. The extent of it is amazing, for it exists both among the teachers and the students, and what can be more absurd than even the partial shunning of the



subject? By so doing, it leads not only to the continuance in some, but the production of it in the yet uninitiated."

There is one other source of nervous debility which ought not to be passed over in silence. I mean excessive sexual indulgence in the married relation. That which may be lawful or customary in the marriage bed may be very unphysiological. It is very certain that the sexual embrace is governed much more by mere habit or morbid propensity, than by true instinct or rational intelligence; and the result is, the extensive prevalence of uterine diseases and displacements, as I have more fully explained in my tract on Female Diseases, and in my larger work on Uterine Diseases and Displacements.

Many a kind and loving husband, who would act reasonably in this matter if he knew how, brings his wife to a bed of sickness, and not unfrequently to the grave, in half a dozen years from the date of marriage, simply by frequent indulgences without regard to the inclination and condition of his conjugal partner. Says Rosch, "If improper coition, that unnatural abuse of the female sex, were only abolished, the women would cease to be the weaker vessel; and the mysteries and inconsistencies of her nature would be annihilated; the season of pregnancy would not be fraught with so many pangs; the peace of married life would not be so frequently disturbed; parents and children would enjoy more vigorous health; premature infirmity would not be the inseparable companion of every trivial disturbance of the system; man would be happier, more lively, and his whole existence more noble."

## LOCAL COMPLICATIONS.

*Leucorrhœa*, with more or less *prolapsus of the uterus*, is the most prominent *local expression* of early constitutional debility in the female. It is generally attended with excessive and weakening hemorrhage at the monthly periods, and sometimes the menstrual function is entirely suppressed. *Menorrhagia* between the menstrual periods is an occasional



accompaniment. It is true that leucorrhea, even in young girls, very frequently arises from causes having no connection with sexual depravity; but I am now treating of the disease only as the effect of self-abuse.

In the male, *seminal discharges*—technically, *spermatorrhea*—are the most troublesome and alarming indications of the morbid condition and accumulated debility of the sexual organs. In extreme cases they are accompanied with prolapsus or falling of one or both testicles, and, not unfrequently, a diminution in size, and “*shriveling*” of the whole genital apparatus. Varicose and sarcoma are also frequent complications.

Spermatorrhea is manifested at first in the form of “nocturnal emissions,” accompanied with lascivious dreams, with more or less vigorous erections. As the debility increases, the emissions take place without any appreciable sexual excitement; sometimes the seminal discharge occurs only after urination or defecation; and occasionally I have had patients whose nocturnal emissions were frequent, while a discharge of a vitiated muco-seminal fluid accompanied each voidance of urine, and every movement of the bowels. Some patients are troubled with emissions quite regularly once or twice a week, or once in ten days or a fortnight, while others escape for three or four weeks, and then have seminal emissions in rapid succession. Some patients lose all sexual appetite, while others retain a morbid and almost constant appetency without the power to produce erection, or to consummate sexual intercourse.

I would not be understood to say that all persons who have seminal emissions have been addicted to masturbation. Many other causes will induce them, as constipation, piles, amorous excitation of the organs, too soft or warm beds, warm drinks, late suppers, stimulating food, general plethora, etc.; but when they become habitual from any cause, they are a source of nervous exhaustion, and should be promptly attended to.



## DRUG-MEDICATION.

If I shall succeed in convincing the class of invalids to whom this tract is specially addressed, that all hope of permanent restoration in the direction of the apothecary shop is a gross delusion, and shall turn their minds at once and forever away from drug-remedies of every name and nature, I shall render them no small service. And to do this is one of the purposes of this work. The infirmities which they have ignorantly or wittingly brought upon themselves are more their misfortune than their fault. Their punishment, which is nothing more nor less than the natural consequences of their misdeeds, is severe enough, God knows. But when to the necessary evils are added the horrid effects of a course of drug-poisoning, the doubly victimized unfortunates may well say, with Cain of old, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Bad as are the consequences of unphysiological habits of any kind, the effects of the drugs administered to cure them are generally still worse.

But I object to drug-medication on principle. 1. It does not cure. 2. It is evil in itself. No class of invalids is more fatally misled and misadvised by regular physicians, nor worse humbugged and robbed by quacks and charlatans. Our large cities are swarming with real or pseudo M.D.'s who drive a profitable trade in selling these easily deluded and half-distracted patients some nostrum to take, or some mechanical contrivance to wear, warranted, of course, to restore the decayed energy, invigorate the exhausted virility, restrain all further morbid tendencies, and make them over as good as new; while the land is flooded with cheap books giving the most horrid descriptions of cases which have been most miraculously cured by the author's particular nostrum.

I wish to address the reason and common sense of the reader; to explain the nature of his suffering, point out the only possible remedial plan, and then leave him to "reflect and inwardly digest."

All of his sufferings are the result of disobedience to phys-



iological law. He has departed from the laws of his own organization, and incurred disease as the penalty. Think you Nature has provided remedies to do away her own penalties? The idea is absurd, and yet on just this absurdity is the whole drug-medical system predicated. Nature has provided no remedy of any kind for physiological transgression; she has provided penalties, and nothing else. Restoration, or cure, is found, if at all, in coming into obedience; not in doing further violence to the vital organism—"adding insult to injury"—by administering poisons. Let the poor sufferer be fully impressed with the conviction that Nature is always just, and right, and true, and unchangeable, and the cure is half made; for "ceasing to do evil" is, emphatically, the "beginning of wisdom," in this matter.

I can scarcely wonder at the preposterous remedies which medical gentlemen often prescribe in these cases. A false system can lead to nothing but erroneous practices. Several patients who have come to me had been advised by the "family physician" to have intercourse with prostitutes, and contract the venereal disease. They were told that the new disease would supersede the old one, and then Nature or the doctor would cure the new one. Shocking as this advice may seem, and really is, I can not see why it is not in keeping with the whole theory of druggery; for the greatest philosophers of the drug-system only pretend that they "cure one disease by producing another." If the reader desires to see this subject exhibited in all of its hideous deformity and horrid consequences, I refer him to my late work on "Sexual Diseases," and my recent tract on "Drug Medicines."

Not less egregiously foolish, and still more ruinous in its consequences to others, is another prescription which regular physicians still more frequently recommend—*matrimony*! Unfortunately, this advice is too often followed; and it requires but a dull imagination to apprehend what must be at least some of the results of a conjugal co-partnership commenced under such circumstances. The hospital, and not the marriage bed, is the place for such persons. My advice to all



persons of both sexes under all circumstances is, never enter into the sacred marriage relation until sexual vigor is not only apparently restored, but fully established; and then be very temperate in the indulgence of the sexual passion.

The medicines which are generally prescribed, both by regular and irregular physicians, for spermatorrhea, impotency, and other forms of sexual or nervous debility, as well as for all the consequences arising therefrom, are, chiefly, preparations of iron, alcohol and narcotics to stupefy the morbid sensations, excite the enfeebled organs to preternatural effort, and force them to manifest a factitious ability for a short time, and thus further waste the vital powers, leaving the nervous system still more exhausted; and these appliances tell the whole story of the rationale of drug-treatment, whether in its ordinary exhibitions as prescribed by the regular physicians, or in its extraordinary effects as administered by the empirics.

It is time that the people understood, what it seems that our popular physicians are not very likely soon to discover, that health can not be *stimulated* into them; that strength and vigor can be *imparted* to the living organism by no drug on earth, for the simple reason, that nothing can supply that which it does not possess; and that vitality *always* results from *nutrition*, and *never* from *stimulation*. As a specimen of the nonsensical twaddle that medical men—I mean *regular* physicians—write, and the credulous and thoughtless people run after and swallow without masticating: one of the authors I have just alluded to, recommends a preparation of *veratrum viride* and *iodine* to “effectually *supply* the constitutional vigor.”

If people were accustomed to exercise their common sense—as generally they are not—on medical subjects, such silly stuff would not deceive them; for no man using his untrammelled reason could help knowing that the combination of a narcotic drug with an irritant poison could not possibly *impart* vitality to a living organism, and could have no effect on the existing constitutional vigor except to *impair* it.



Of the specific nostrums which are so disgustingly paraded in newspaper advertisements, and so knavishly lauded—"warranted to cure in every case"—in the trashy publications of the cheap-literature dealers, it is enough to say they are, without a single exception, *lying frauds*. I have had hundreds of patients who had been the whole round of the advertising empirics, and paid a special fee for a "sure cure" to several of the authors of small books on "Spermatorrhea," "Impotency," "Human Frailty," "Sterility," "Venereal Diseases," etc.—each one claiming to be an "American Ricord," or an ex-Surgeon and Professor to some European Hospital—yet not one of them ever received any permanent benefit, while most of them were sensibly and materially injured. Nor have I ever known any lasting benefit to be derived from "Medicated Bougies," "Urethral Supporters," "Perineum Compresses," "Ricord's Blood Purifier," "Etherized Veratrum Viride and Iodine," "Treisemar," "Cauterization of the Seminal Ducts;" nor from a score of other equally prominent nostrums and contrivances for—*making money*. They have, however, done something to impart life and vigor to trade. They have augmented the energy of the circulating medium. They have kept no inconsiderable stream of the "constitutional currency" moving *en route* from the pockets of the people to the publishers of newspapers all over the land, and to the coffers of their authors and inventors in the cities; so that, in a business point of view, these enterprising medical advertisers may be deserving of all praise.

That some professed Water-Cure physicians advertise to cure seminal emissions by "cauterization," as a specialty of professional business, proves nothing in favor of the practice, but suggests a suspicion of the honesty or intelligence of the physician.

### HYGIENIC TREATMENT.

The limits of this tract will not allow me to point out, in detail, the management applicable to all cases of sexual or nervous debility. I must confine myself mainly to the mere



statement of general principles. Indeed, my object is to direct the minds of the afflicted to the particular subjects which they should investigate and understand for themselves, and rescue them from the horde of pretentious charlatans—who have no thought or desire but to speculate out of their miseries—rather than to give prescriptions for the treatment of particular cases.

No class of invalids presents greater diversity of bodily and mental conditions; none require a more rigidly physiological regimen, nor a nicer discrimination in adapting each and all of the appliances of our system to their individual habits, temperaments, and circumstances. Some few only need to be instructed in the better way, and they will pursue it undeviatingly, despite the opposition of friends, the ridicule of neighbors, and the denunciations of doctors, until restoration is complete. But, unfortunately, the great majority, when the trial comes, find themselves as sadly deficient in will-power as they are weak in bodily energy; and these need to be constantly encouraged, directed, and sustained by another mind. They require to be buoyed up and magnetized with faith and resolution, such as can only be imparted to them by a medical friend and adviser, whose daily walk and conversation is an illustration of the laws of life, and who can represent in himself a “sound mind in a sound body.”

I wish particularly to caution these invalids from expecting *too much* of hygienic treatment. I have known patients who had been for ten years but little better than wrecks of humanity, and who had been drugged for half this time with the dreadful missiles of the apothecary shop, become discouraged because they could not realize some wonderful improvement in three weeks! Such persons ought to be well satisfied if three years' obedience to organic law will repair the damages of ten years' disobedience. It is fortunate enough if a few months of obedience to law can retrieve the consequences of as many years of disobedience.

These patients do not always know whether they are doing well or ill. They can not always tell whether the changing



symptoms and varying sensations indicate progress or retrogradation. And here they need another mind on which they can rely; for nothing so wears them down and defeats the objects of treatment as a state of mental anxiety and suspense. This is why these patients do not succeed better with self-treatment. Almost every day I send one or more prescriptions for home-treatment. A part of the cases recover without difficulty; another class can do nothing at all; and the remainder improve a little for a few weeks, and then come to a "stand-still."

The difficulty is seldom in themselves, or in the system. It is in the surrounding circumstances, or in the want of intelligence. This I have proved abundantly. Scores of patients who have done all they could for themselves at home, with little or no improvement, have subsequently come under treatment at my establishment, and recovered without difficulty. I mention these things not to discourage efforts at self-restoration. I advise all to cure themselves at home if they can. But I would not have the thousands who are not thus fortunate, live miserably and die ingloriously when a cure is possible elsewhere.

One of the greatest disadvantages of home-treatment is this: There is a sense of self-abasement, a morbid shame-facedness, and a keen sense of personal degradation weighing upon the spirits of these invalids. They can not bear to have their condition known, nor even suspected. They will not let their friends understand them. Whatever they do must have reference to concealment. Many of them would almost as soon die as to have the world, or even their parents, brothers or sisters, friends or physicians, know what they have done. If they understand for themselves what cause they ought to pursue to regain health, they can not practice it without exposing themselves to the charge of eccentricity or lunacy. Their friends, in ignorance of their situation, will naturally ridicule their "new-fangled notions" of eating coarse bread, abjuring the flesh-pots, ignoring butter, cheese, and even milk, spending one or two hours a day sitting in a tub of water, and



slopping up the room with wet bandages, etc. These processes seem very ridiculous to those who do not understand the rationale of such conduct; and it is not to be wondered at that they should regard such aquatic proceedings as indications of incipient insanity.

But, on the other hand, the opposition of those friends who are aware of the patient's infirmity is often quite as effectual in preventing the proper management. They can not understand how disease is to be overcome and strength regained by continually dabbling and splashing in "cold water," and living on "a low, meager diet." They will therefore either refuse to prepare such food as is indispensable, or if they consent to do it, it is with a protest, and with a continual lecturing of the patient upon his fanaticism and folly, so that his food is as apt to create dyspepsia as to renovate the tissues.

Quiet, hope, confidence, peace of mind, mental hygiene—are always of first importance in these cases. The best plan of bathing, and dieting, and exercising in the world will fail if the mind is distracted with doubt, fretted with contention, disquieted with opposition, or annoyed with ridicule. In many cases I find it all that I can do, with all the surroundings favorable, with the full intellectual confidence of the patient, and with ever-ready attendants to do all that the patient requires or desires, to keep his mind above the range of depressing melancholy, and out of the order of feverish anxiety. What then must his chance be where no one speaks a word of encouragement, but all conspire against him? These patients need another mind to lean upon, and another's will-power to allure or urge them, as the case may be, onward and upward in a life of severe privation and stern self-denial. But, in a majority of cases, if they undertake self-treatment, they must expect and be prepared to bear up with their own minds against the downward pressure of many other minds; or they must take to themselves an independence of spirit, and an indifference to the opinion, and approbation, or disapprobation of others, which but few, in a feeble condition of mind and body, find it possible to assume.



Those who undertake self-treatment will be all the better prepared to do it successfully, by clearly apprehending and preparing for the obstacles I have pointed out, for to be forewarned of the difficulties is in some measure to be forearmed against them.

I can here only give general rules for self-management. And I would recommend every one to post himself by reading and study, as much as possible, respecting the principles of the Hygienic system, and the rules always to be observed in bathing, dieting, exercising, etc. He may find a very brief yet clear explanation of the bathing processes applicable to home-treatment, and a full statement of the general bathing rules to be observed in all cases, in a little work I have lately published, entitled "Water-Cure for the Million." In this work, also, are very convenient recipes for making the right kind of bread-food, with many other useful recipes for physiological cooking. He would do well also to procure, as a work of reference on many subjects on which he will at times feel the need of information, my larger work, the "Hydropathic Encyclopedia."

I regard the dietary as of more importance than the bathing in a majority of these cases. The general error with those who try to cure themselves is in using too much water, and too promiscuous a dietary. It has been most unfortunate for the Hygienic system, that so many of its early advocates, authors and practitioners, put water so prominently forward as a remedial measure. In consequence of this error, misapprehension, or indiscretion, the people generally have been led to suppose that our system is, what its opponents (who, by the way, know better) are continually misrepresenting it to be, viz., a method of treating all diseases with "water alone."

So far as bathing is concerned, the most important rule for the patient to observe is, *personal comfort*. He should take no baths so cold, nor so prolonged, as to induce any very disagreeable sensations nor permanent chilliness. If he keeps carefully within these rules he may safely employ water in almost any convenient way, always, however, regarding the



Rules for Bathing as explained in my other works alluded to. I would here, however, particularly caution those who undertake self-treatment, against the notion that *crises* are necessary. Some practitioners seem to regard that violent disturbance, which they call a "powerful crisis," as indispensable to a radical cure. It is a most mischievous doctrine. Crises may occur under the most judicious treatment, and are then always beneficial; but when provoked or aggravated by too cold bathing, or by excessive water-drinking, or by exhausting exercise, they are pernicious. I have had patients come to me from so-called Water-Cure establishments, who had been, as they learned of their doctors, "kept under crisis" for several months. The truth is, they had been kept chilled, debilitated, and stupefied for several months by maltreatment. A few years since I saw at a water-cure in an adjoining State, kept by a German physician who claimed to be an American Priessnitz, a young lady who had been (so her brother informed me) under crisis for *two years*! Under the management she was subjected to, I could see no better prospect for her than to remain "under crisis" the rest of her life.

When these patients have come under my advice, I have at once suspended the "heroic" part of the treatment—cured the crisis—after which they soon commenced progressing in the right direction.

Exercise, whether of work or play, should be carefully regulated by the muscular ability of the patient. It should be regular, frequent, and gentle, rather than fitful, violent, and at long intervals. I have found the most common error in this respect to be too severe exercise at too long intervals.

Early rising should always be insisted on; and it is better to go to bed with a moderate feeling of fatigue, but not to that degree that induces nervous disquiet and prevents sound sleep. A hard bed is indispensable.

Mental occupation is important. The mind should never be left to dwell continually on the dark side of life. Without something to call out and exercise the mind usefully and agreeably, it is almost sure to waste itself, and aggravate the



bodily infirmities in unavailing regrets and fearful apprehensions. So unendurable is the agony of anxiety and despondency in some cases, that the poor sufferers have resorted to the very practice which has occasioned all of their miseries, and which they know will aggravate them in the future, in order to procure a mere momentary relief.

Among the dietetic articles which I find particularly objectionable in these complaints, are *milk* and *sugar*. Salt and vinegar (which are not dietetic articles at all, though employed dietetically) are more harmful to the general system than are milk and sugar; still, they do not specially aggravate sexual weakness as these articles do. The reason is, that milk and sugar induce costiveness and increase the urinary secretion, and thus irritate in a double manner the sexual organs.

My experience is in favor of a fruit and farinaceous diet, with a very small allowance of vegetables. I regard fermented or raised bread as exceedingly objectionable. The evening meal should always be very light, and taken early, or not at all.

A majority of patients will emaciate somewhat at first, in the process of recovery. It is essential to get a sound condition first, even though the bulk diminishes. Many patients are alarmed at the least appearance of thinness and paleness, and under self-treatment are very apt to be "frightened out of their propriety" by meddlesome relatives or ignorant doctors, on leaving off a stimulating regimen and becoming a little thinner and paler. Not long since I visited a patient, a New Englander, whose physicians—one of them the physician of a water-cure—had all prescribed *beef*, *brandy*, and *iron*. The medical profession very generally entertains the absurd notion that iron is, in some mysterious manner, a "blood food," that is, capable of imparting something to the system that the blood requires, in cases of debility and anemia, when the patient is emaciated and bloodless. And some who call themselves Hydropathic physicians are of the same opinion. There was never a greater delusion. The living organism can not use inorganic elements of any kind except the gases.



Whether iron does, or does not, exist in the blood, and whether it is, or is not, a constituent of the tissues, matters not here. It is enough that the living system only uses and appropriates, in its functional processes, organic and compound elements, as they exist in water and in aliments and alimentary principles, and does not, and can not, do anything with any mineral salt or oxyd, or any earthy material whatever, except to reject it as a poison.

I regret for the sake of the cause of truth and of health-reform, as well as for the sake of their patients, that there are persons who assume to be Hygienic physicians, yet who can not distinguish between a hygienic agent and a drug poison.



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